

AMENDMENTSIN THE CLAIMS:

Cancel Claims 1-32 and replace them with the following new claims (some of these claims have also been refiled in a proper divisional application).

NEW CLAIMS:

33.(New) A thermoplastic article comprising at least one polyolefin resin, at least one silver-containing antimicrobial agent, and from at least 0.1% to 1.25% by weight of the polymer of at least one carboxylic acid salt component.

a 34.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 33 wherein said carboxylic acid salt is present in an amount of from about 0.2 to about 1.0% by weight of the polymer.

35.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 34 wherein said carboxylic acid salt is present in an amount of from 0.2 to about 0.5% by weight of the total polymer.

36.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 35 wherein said carboxylic acid salt is present in an amount of about 0.3% by weight of the total polymer.

37.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 33 wherein said at least one silver-containing antimicrobial agent is an inorganic silver-containing compound and wherein said at least one carboxylic acid salt is selected from the group consisting of at least C₁-C₄₀ carboxylic acid compound neutralized by at least one cation selected from the group consisting of monovalent metal ions, bivalent ions, and trivalent metal ions.

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38.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 37 wherein said inorganic silver-containing antimicrobial agent is selected from the group consisting of silver zirconium phosphates, silver glasses, silver zeolites, and any mixtures thereof, and said carboxylic acid salt is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal acetates, alkali metal stearates, alkaline earth metal acetates, alkaline earth metal stearates, zinc stearate, tin(II) stearate, aluminum stearate, and any mixtures thereof.

39.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 38 wherein said inorganic silver-containing antimicrobial agent is silver zirconium phosphate, and wherein said carboxylic acid salt is calcium stearate.

40.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 34 wherein said at least one silver-containing antimicrobial agent is an inorganic silver-containing compound and wherein said at least one carboxylic acid salt is selected from the group consisting of at least C₁-C₄₀ carboxylic acid compound neutralized by at least one cation selected from the group consisting of monovalent metal ions, bivalent ions, and trivalent metal ions.

41.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 40 wherein said inorganic silver-containing antimicrobial agent is selected from the group consisting of silver zirconium phosphates, silver glasses, silver zeolites, and any mixtures thereof, and said carboxylic acid salt is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal acetates, alkali metal stearates, alkaline earth metal acetates, alkaline earth metal stearates, zinc stearate, tin(II) stearate, aluminum stearate, and any mixtures thereof.

42.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 41 wherein said inorganic silver-containing antimicrobial agent is silver zirconium phosphate, and wherein said carboxylic acid salt is calcium stearate.

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43.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 35 wherein said at least one silver-containing antimicrobial agent is an inorganic silver-containing compound and wherein said at least one carboxylic acid salt is selected from the group consisting of at least C₁-C₄₀ carboxylic acid compound neutralized by at least one cation selected from the group consisting of monovalent metal ions, bivalent ions, and trivalent metal ions.

44.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 43 wherein said inorganic silver-containing antimicrobial agent is selected from the group consisting of silver zirconium phosphates, silver glasses, silver zeolites, and any mixtures thereof, and said carboxylic acid salt is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal acetates, alkali metal stearates, alkaline earth metal acetates, alkaline earth metal stearates, zinc stearate, tin(II) stearate, aluminum stearate, and any mixtures thereof.

45.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 44 wherein said inorganic silver-containing antimicrobial agent is silver zirconium phosphate, and wherein said carboxylic acid salt is calcium stearate.

46.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 36 wherein said at least one silver-containing antimicrobial agent is an inorganic silver-containing compound and wherein said at least one carboxylic acid salt is selected from the group consisting of at least C₁-C₄₀ carboxylic acid compound neutralized by at least one cation selected from the group consisting of monovalent metal ions, bivalent ions, and trivalent metal ions.

47.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 46 wherein said inorganic silver-containing antimicrobial agent is selected from the group consisting of silver zirconium phosphates, silver glasses, silver zeolites, and any mixtures thereof, and said carboxylic acid salt is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal acetates, alkali metal stearates, alkaline earth metal acetates, alkaline earth metal stearates, zinc stearate, tin(II) stearate, aluminum stearate, and any mixtures thereof.

48.(New) The thermoplastic article of Claim 47 wherein said inorganic silver-containing antimicrobial agent is silver zirconium phosphate, and wherein said carboxylic acid salt is calcium stearate.